



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
OFFICE OF COMMUNITY ORIENTED POLICING SERVICES

COPS

Office of the Director
145 N Street NE, Washington, DC 20530

Dear NAPO Member,

Just in the weeks following a stakeholder meeting with the NAPO Executive Director and staff, our nation is now facing the COVID-19 virus with implications throughout America and the world. At the COPS Office we want grantees, stakeholders and first responders to be fully aware of adjustments being made to confront COVID-19 work-related issues, grant-related challenges and communications with law enforcement first responders and stakeholders. Additionally, I want to provide a brief update on the work of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice.

The U.S. Department of Justice, via the Deputy Attorney General, was given guidance on the government protocols related to staffing and reinforcing the top priority of protecting the Department's employees. The COPS Office immediately responded by allowing our staff to work remotely and not report to our office building. Although there are still some staff reporting to our office, the majority are working from home. We have tested our capability to work remotely and are ready to continue the work of the COPS Office in a seamless manner. All of our program staff are equipped with laptops, cell phones and other electronic devices to keep the COPS Office in a "full service" mode for thousands of grantees, law enforcement first responders and stakeholders. It is important to visit our website to gain the most up-to-date information on extensions to solicitations, monitoring reports, and other critical items impacting grantees and applicants, as well as the important work we are doing jointly with the law enforcement field on officer safety and wellness.

In recent days we have seen the dramatic impact the COVID-19 virus is having on our first responders. Our thoughts and prayers go out to each law enforcement member, their respective departments, and their families during these most trying times. Officer safety and wellness continues to be a priority for Attorney General Barr and President Trump. The DOJ is making every effort possible to assist state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies and the many heroes serving their communities. At the COPS Office we want to make sure we are hearing from the field and giving back to the fullest degree possible.

Recently, Attorney General Barr delivered a video message to our most valued law enforcement officers, thanking them for their incredible service and sacrifice, especially during the pandemic COVID-19 virus that is devastating our communities. The Attorney General routinely thanks law enforcement for their efforts; however, in this message he wanted to place a special emphasis on his support for law enforcement, ending his remarks with the statement that he "has your back."



This tribute to law enforcement is felt throughout the Department of Justice and by President Trump.

NAPO is a strong advocate for the men and women serving in law enforcement, especially when addressing officer safety and wellness. Most recently, NAPO was well represented by the President of NAPO at the DOJ Officer Safety and Wellness Working Group meeting held in Washington, D.C. on March 9, 2020. During this most recent session, the discussion focused on small and rural law enforcement agencies as they experience the worst of human misery, abuses and other tragedies as do other law enforcement agencies.

Let me now turn to the work of the President's Commission on Law Enforcement and the Administration of Justice. The Commissioners, working group members and staff have been working tirelessly to complete their work. On February 27th, the Commission held its first full meeting during the IACP Officer Safety and Wellness Symposium in Miami. The focus of the meeting was on law enforcement officer safety and wellness, hearing from a number of working groups and witnesses providing testimony on a wide range of challenges. Valuable and powerful testimony was provided to the Commissioners and those in attendance. Many of the Commissioners and working group members attended symposium sessions to gain further insight into the challenges faced by today's law enforcement professionals. The Commission hearing room was full of observers, witnesses, working group members, the press, and the community at large. We came away from Miami with a deep appreciation for the issues and challenges, but also with some recommendations on how to improve the various approaches to officer safety and wellness.

Since the President's Commission meeting in Miami and due to the pandemic COVID-19 virus, the Commission and staff have adopted a new approach to meetings so this important work can continue. Each week, the Commission is holding two to three teleconferences, hosting panels of subject matter experts during each session. At this time, the sessions are working well and the testimony is rich and robust, addressing the topics necessary for discussion.

Nearly 200 professionals are involved with the work of the Commission, including more than 150 working group members, 17 Commissioners and nearly 30 staff and DOJ leadership members. The meeting between COPS Office leadership and NAPO's Executive Director will ensure that the ideas, research and focus of the membership of NAPO are conveyed to the full Commission. The active role of NAPO in the President's Commission is sincerely appreciated, and will help to shape the Commission's final report.

Sincerely,



Phil Keith, Director
Office of Community Oriented Policing Services